

Anatolian Shepherd Dog: an Ancient Breed

Marilyn Harned

"A gaze fixed on me, it was like a physical blow. Where . . . ? A big dog, right in the middle of the flock was slowly uncurling. Dusty dog and dusty sheep. I had not noticed while all were asleep. His patchy, tawny and white body had blended perfectly in the dappled shade, slightly darker muzzle made him look menacing now, as did his stance. He rose slowly and gingerly, started stepping over the backs of his unconcerned charges, tail coming up, back ramrod straight. A wave of admiration hit me. There was a functional beauty chiseled to perfection by countless generations of work . . . I had been instantly cured of all desire to approach sheep in that land. I had met the GUARDIAN!"¹

The graduate geologist from Cambridge University on expedition in the Middle East who wrote the above encounter experienced a meeting with a living relic from the days of the ancient Sumerian Kings. She had come face to face with a breed of dog that has survived and thrived out on the rugged Anatolian Plateau of Turkey and Asia Minor for over 6,000 years. She had met the Coban Köpegi or in English: ANATOLIAN SHEPHERD DOG.

The Anatolian shepherd dog, and impressive breed native to Turkey, has for centuries been the shepherd's front-line defense of his flock from predators and has only recently been introduced into the Western World. Historically, since Babylonian times, there was a breed of large, strong dogs with a heavy head. They were employed as war dogs and for hunting big game such as lions and horses. Some spectacular examples of the breed can be seen on the well-preserved bas reliefs in the Assyrian Rooms of the British Museum in London.

As a child growing up in Santa Ana, California, Marilyn Harned never owned a dog. In fact, it wasn't until 1974 that she acquired her first dog, a 7-month Anatolian shepherd dog named "Sandy." Since that time, Marilyn and her husband Quinn, secretary of the Anatolian Shepherd Dog Club of America, have acquired four more Anatolians which reside with them in Alpine, California. Marilyn and Quinn Harned have become patrons of the Livestock Guarding Dog Project at Hampshire College, and last summer they co-sponsored Dr. Raymond Coppinger, director of the project, to go to Turkey to research the breed and acquire new breeding stock. During her 7-year association with the breed, Marilyn has accumulated an extensive library of information on the Anatolian shepherd here in America. She maintains the Registry for the Anatolian shepherd dog in the U.S., and has traveled extensively throughout the U.S. and England recording the progress of the Breed.

Editor's Note: This is another guard dog story in response to the wishes of several in the Reader Survey conducted in 1980.



Anatolian Shepherd Dog

The Anatolian shepherd dog is a truly magnificent animal to behold. The classic coloring of this breed, with black ears and muzzle, is often called "Karabash," or literally, "black head." Other color variants may include buff or white (Akbash—"white head"), tricolor, or even an occasional black. The Anatolian shepherd is imposing both in size and stature, with dogs standing at least 29 inches at the shoulder and weighing at least 100 pounds at full maturity. Its profile is accentuated by the tail which tends to curl over the back when the dog is on full alert. The dogs can have a lion-like impression heightened by the erect ear stubs after cropping, a common practice in Turkey. There is a decidedly slinky, lion-like grace about these dogs as they are seen at work. In their native land, Turkish shepherds may put huge iron-spiked collars on their dogs as added protection when the dog is out guarding the flocks against wolves, jackals, and bears. The awesome appearance of these dogs often strikes fear in the hearts of native Turks, who know only too well the still primitive nature of this Breed.

The present form of the Anatolian shepherd dog has evolved over the ages to suit a specific set of circumstances. The most formative of these circumstances include the climate, the lifestyle of the shepherds, and the job assigned to the dogs. These three factors have combined to produce a breed which possesses a loyalty, independence, and hardiness which is just now becoming appreciated in agricultural circles.

The climate of the Central Anatolian Plateau of Turkey is continental. The average elevation is 3,000 feet above sea level, valleys surrounded by mountains 5,000 to 10,000 feet high. The summers are extremely hot and very dry, temperatures reaching as high as 120°; in winter there is prolonged snow with temperatures plunging to as low as -60°. The dogs stay out all the time—whatever the weather may be. The shepherd dog is considered to be something lower than a pig

¹ Czartoryska, Natalia, "Five Minutes in the Life of a Geologist," The Guardian, Fall 1980.

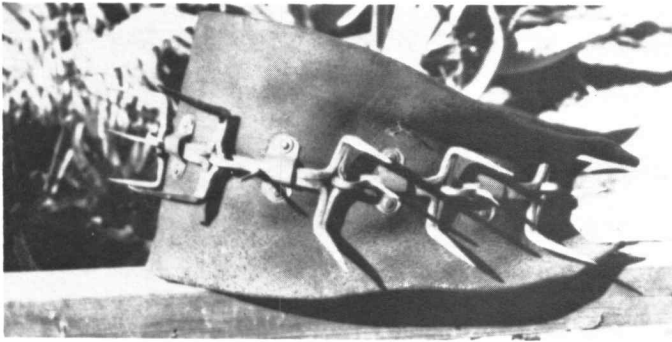


Photo: Robert C. Ballard

Turkish Spiked Collar worn as added protection against predators.

and, as Dr. Edmond S. Bordeaux, famous writer and philosopher, wrote in his treatise entitled *Messengers from Ancient Civilizations*: "They are totally without glamour, for to survive in the harsh wilderness of the arid and rugged mountains of Anatolia, a dog must be a perfect and functional tool of nature."²

Turkish sheep bunch naturally and have little, if any, inclination to scatter. The dogs do not herd the sheep, but patrol around them, often seeking higher ground to get a better view, and a breeze. The sheep tend to follow the shepherd, and if he moves off, one or more lines form, with the last sheep striving to overtake some of its fellows. The dogs patrol the ground ahead, checking out every bush and irregularity of the terrain for potential trouble. "The pups are ruthlessly culled by the shepherds and by nature, and those who survive are lean and muscular, able and ready to attack any creature—even present-day automobiles—which appears to threaten their sheep."³

To own an Anatolian shepherd dog is a great responsibility, for one is dealing with a primitive breed that has rarely experienced affection and gentle play. While the Anatolian does have a sensitive nature, and a verbal reprimand from its master is far more effective than physical punishment for incorrect behavior, "it is too much to expect that after centuries of deadly serious work, lives of terrible hardship spent in constant struggle for existence of themselves and their sheep, when a second of inattention could mean death, that in one short generation they should run with tails wagging to greet a stranger, no matter how well-intentioned . . ."⁴

In light of this harsh existence, the Anatolian shepherd dog possesses both strength and agility, combined with a self-sufficient temperament, to produce a vigorous outdoor working dog which can, indeed, withstand such extremes of terrain, climate and lifestyle.

The first known Anatolian shepherd dogs to enter the United States arrived in the 1950's, imported by Dr. Rodney Young of the University of Pennsylvania, who directed the excavations at Gordium, of King Midas legend. However, the first active breeding program in the United States was the result of the importation of a pair of dogs by Lt. Robert C. Ballard, U.S.N., and his family upon returning to the United States from duty in Ankara, Turkey. Writes Lt. Ballard:

A few months before moving my family to Turkey, my wife and I met several couples and individuals that had resided in, or had

²Bordeaux, Edmond S. and Norma Nilsson Bordeaux, "The Asia Minor Anatolian Heritage," *Messengers from Ancient Civilizations*, Academy Books, San Diego, California, 1974, p. 24.

³*ibid*

⁴*ibid*.

traveled in Turkey. Amongst the myriad of details and advice was the recurring mention of impressive shepherd dogs. Having little interest in dogs at the time, the comments went largely disregarded until later when we discovered the breed firsthand. We drove from Naples, Italy to Ankara, Turkey in a large, four-wheel drive vehicle and saw examples of the breed within a week after our arrival. We recognized them as the dogs our acquaintances had told us we would see. During the second month of our two-year residence in Ankara, our car was forcibly entered and emptied of miscellaneous tools and equipment. As a result, plans were made to ensure better security for car, yard, and dwelling. After a bit of research and comparison, it became increasingly obvious that the best qualified candidate for combination family dog/watchdog choice would be one of the locally famed shepherd dogs. Another month was spent searching for a good specimen puppy. Our choice was a six-week old male from a village where once stood the ancient city of Gordium.⁵

The Ballards named the puppy Zorba. Lt. Ballard and his wife, Dorothy, took their new puppy back to Ankara, where they raised him in a civilized environment—much different from the environment of his semiwild parents who lived in the fiercely rugged countryside surrounding the village of Karipinar. The Ballards became quickly aware of the special nature of this Old World breed—fierce protectiveness, perceptive character, and love for family. Lt. Ballard became fluent in the Turkish language and spent many weekends and vacations traveling throughout the country learning the customs of the Turkish people, but more importantly, learning the history and behavior of this magnificent Turkish breed of dog.

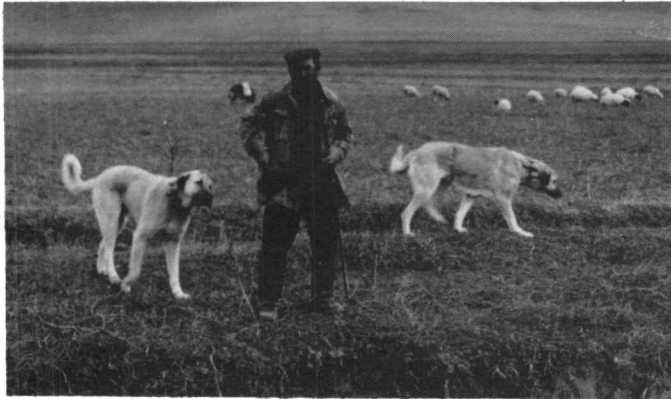
Before returning to the United States in 1968, the Ballards chose Zorba a mate, a young Anatolian shepherd bitch named Peki. Zorba and Peki's first litter was whelped on August 16, 1970, in El Cajon, California. The year 1970 also saw the importation of a second breeding pair, as well as the founding of the national breed club, the Anatolian Shepherd Dog Club of America. There are currently over 300 Anatolian shepherds registered in the United States scattered over 26 states.

The Anatolian shepherd dog is just now beginning to receive proper recognition for its potential as a badly needed livestock guarding dog for U.S. agriculture. The breed is actively participating in a nationally known research project, the Livestock Guarding Dog Project at Hampshire College, Amherst, Massachusetts. Dr. Raymond Coppinger, Director of that project, is studying the Anatolian shepherd dog, together with the Italian Maremma and the Yugoslavian Shar

⁵Harned, Marilyn and Robert C. Ballard, "What the Heck is an Anatolian Shepherd Dog?", *The Guardian*, Fall 1980.



Anatolian shepherd guarding her flock in New England.



Anatolian shepherd dogs in Turkey.

Photo: Nataalka Czartoryska

Planinac in hopes that these breeds will prove to be a viable solution to the predation problem on federal grazing lands here in the United States.

In 1972, the Federal Government banned the use of poisons on federal lands, and a November 1979 directive from Secretary of the Interior Cecil D. Andrus stated that "official policy for federal grazing lands would now emphasize nonlethal, noncapture methods of control, that only the animal

actually doing the damage would be removed, and then only by humane methods."⁶

As a result of that directive, livestock guarding dogs became an important issue and topic of conversation among sheep producers. While research with the Old World breeds still continues, we are hopeful and encouraged that breeds such as our Anatolian shepherd dog just may provide an inexpensive, realistic, and environmentally sound solution to the predator problem which is plaguing the sheep ranchers of this country.

To see an Anatolian shepherd dog and to live and work side by side with it and to study its behavior is to enjoy a piece of ancient history, carved and hewn to perfection and still possessing courage, sensitivity and intellect, "a remnant of the dim past when the dog first threw in his lot with man against the other wild beasts for reasons unknown."⁷ This is the Anatolian shepherd dog—an ancient breed—alive and well in a civilized society.

For additional information on the breed, contact: Anatolian Shepherd Dog Club of America, P.O. Box 1271, Alpine, California 92001, (714) 445-3334.

⁶Coppinger, Raymond and Lorna, "So Firm a Friendship," *Natural History*, March 1980, p. 18.

⁷Bordeaux, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

Application Invited for Position of Executive Secretary of Society for Range Management

The Executive Secretary shall serve as the Chief Administrative Officer of the Society for Range Management; is accountable to the Board of Directors and is under the immediate supervision of the President.

DATE JOB TO BE FILLED:

August 1, 1982 or as soon thereafter as selected candidate is available.

SALARY:

Commensurate with experience and qualifications.

QUALIFICATIONS:

Demonstrated ability in public relations and communication, both internal and external to the SRM.

Demonstrated ability in organization management and administration.

Desire and ability to serve SRM members and Sections on an international basis.

Education and/or experience in range management or the renewable resource sciences that are basic to range management.

Effectiveness in working with volunteer organizations.

SPECIFIC DUTIES:

The Executive Secretary shall supervise the Society's office and its employees and be responsible for (1) all files and financial records of the Society, the expenditure of funds, the receipt and deposit of money, the management of investments and the audit of records; (2) the keeping of

records of membership (5500 or more members), dues payments. Section affiliation, mailing lists, dues notices and correlation of records with those of the Sections; (3) service to Board of Directors, Society committees and to Sections; (4) issuing ballots for election of officers; (5) serving as managing editor of the *Journal of Range Management* and *Rangelands* and special publications; (6) seeking and originating opportunities to represent the Society and to project its image; (7) assisting the educational and informational programs and projects of the Society; (8) responding to inquiries and personal contacts regarding the Society and attending selected meetings; (9) assisting and participating actively in membership recruitment; and (10) coordinating activities associated with Society meetings.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER:

Applicants will be considered without discrimination for reasons such as age, race, religion, sex or national origin.

APPLICATIONS:

Applications will be evaluated beginning June 15, 1982. Applications will be receivable until the position is filled. Candidates should send a resume, three or more references and a letter of application to the chairman of the Search Committee:

Dr. S. Clark Martin
4402 East Sixth Street
Tucson, Arizona 85711